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Israeli Fanatic is Mr. Bush's 'Brain'

By Michael Collins Piper

Supporters of Israel were delighted to learn that President George W. Bush's recent call in his much-heralded inaugural address for worldwide democratic revolution was based on the philosophy of Soviet-born Israeli cabinet minister Anatoly "Natan" Sharansky.

While a recent popular documentary, Bush's Brain, suggested that Karl Rove, the president's political advisor, was the mastermind who tells the president what to think, it is now clear that Sharansky is the one who actually has bragging rights to that title.

Although he gained worldwide attention in the 1970s as a Soviet dissident, make no mistake in thinking that Sharansky was ever any kind of Western-style free-market conservative or anti-communist. Instead, Sharansky was a traditional old-line communist who — like many others in the Soviet Union — simply ran afoul of the ruling regime. But thanks to an adoring international media, Sharansky capitalized on his imprisonment by the Soviets — accused of being a spy for the CIA — and emerged as a much-touted "human rights activist."

Later, after his release from prison, Sharansky emigrated to Israel and soon established himself as one of the country's most outspoken extremist leaders who condemns even Israel's heavy-handed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as being "too soft" on Palestinians.

The role of Sharansky in guiding Bush's thinking is no "conspiracy theory." Instead, recent disclosures from the White House — published, although not prominently, in the mainstream media — demonstrate that not only did Sharansky personally consult with the president in drafting the controversial inaugural address, but — in addition — at least two of Sharansky's key neo-conservative American publicists, William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer, were among those brought in to compose Bush's revolutionary proclamation.

HOW BUSH THINKS

Bush told ***The Washington Times*** in an interview published on Jan. 12 — prior to his inauguration: "If you want a glimpse of how I think about foreign policy, read Natan Sharansky's book, ***The Case for Democracy.*** It's a great book."

Buried in the very last paragraph of a very lengthy article published on Jan. 22, ***The New York Times*** reported that "The president was given [Sharansky's] book and asked Mr. Sharansky to meet with him in the Oval Office. . . . Mr. Bush also gave the book to several aides, urging them to read it as well. Mr. Sharansky visited the White House last November."

The ***Times*** did not disclose who gave the book to the president.

Affirming the ***Times's*** disclosure, ***The Washington Post*** revealed on Jan. 22 — although, again, in the closing paragraphs of an extended analysis — that an administration official said that planning for Bush's address began immediately after the November election and that Bush himself had invited Sharansky to the White House to consult with him. In the ***Post's*** words, "Sharansky also helped shape the speech with his book."

It was the Post which revealed that two well-known "neoconservative" supporters of Israel — William Kristol, publisher of billionaire Rupert Murdoch's ***Weekly Standard*** magazine, and psychiatrist-turned-pundit Charles Krauthammer, a strident advocate for harsh U.S. military and economic warfare against the Arab and Muslim worlds — were also among those brought in to help draft the president's address.

Kristol and Krauthammer are generally acknowledged in the mainstream media in America as being among those dubbed by AFP as "the high priests of war." The two were instrumental in promoting the U.S. war against Iraq, which was a measure high up on Israel's "want list" for the Bush administration.

The individual on the White House staff whom the ***Post*** says helped set up the planning conferences to direct Bush's thinking was Peter Wehner, who is director of the White House Office of Strategic Initiatives.

Wehner is a Kristol protégé, having been his deputy when Kristol was chief of staff for former Reagan administration Education Secretary William Bennett. Bennett had been a protégé of Kristol's father, famed "ex-Trotskyite" communist- turned- neo-conservative, Irving Kristol.

Considering Kristol's wide-ranging input, shaping Bush's mindset, it is no surprise that, as the ***Post*** put it, "Bush's grand ambitions excited his neo-conservative supporters who see his call to put the United States in the forefront of the battle to spread democracy as noble and necessary."

On Jan. 24, Kristol chimed in with an editorial in ***The Weekly Standard*** declaring that "it's good news that the president is so enthusiastic about Sharansky's work. It suggests that, despite all the criticism, and the difficulties, the president remains determined to continue to lead the nation along the basic foreign policy lines he laid down in his first term."

BBC News noted on Jan. 22 that Sharansky "has in fact been moving in American conservative circles for some time."

As far back as July 2002 — just prior to the time Bush delivered a hotly debated speech calling for "democratization" of the Arab world — neo-conservative Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was in attendance at a conference addressed by Sharansky during which the Israeli leader put forth the same demand.

Shortly thereafter, when Bush gave his own speech, echoing Sharansky, the Israeli hard-liner "provided an important bit of last-minute affirmation," according to American neo-conservative Richard Perle, who — between stints in government, during which time he was suspected of espionage on behalf of Israel — peddled weapons for an Israeli arms manufacturer.

BIG NEWS IN ISRAEL

Although the news of Sharansky's profound influence is not widely known among grassroots Americans outside Washington, it is big news in Israel, where ***The Jerusalem Post*** headlined a story declaring: "White House takes a page out of Sharansky's democracy playbook." The Israeli newspaper went so far as to say on Jan. 20 that Bush is "doing [Sharansky's book] promotion free of charge," pointing out that the president hyped Sharansky's book in an interview on CNN.

But it's not only Bush who is relying on Sharansky. On Jan. 20, Scotland's independent-minded newspaper, ***The Scotsman***, noted that "Mr. Sharansky's influence on the way Washington now sees the world was clear this week when Condoleezza Rice quoted him during her Senate confirmation hearings," confirming that the Israeli hard-liner is very much the brains behind Bush policy.

The fact that Sharansky happens to be in charge of "Diaspora affairs" in the Israeli cabinet is significant. The term "Diaspora" refers to all Jews living outside the borders of Israel. The "mission statement" of Sharansky's cabinet office says it places its "emphasis on Israel, Zionism, Jerusalem and the interdependence of Jews worldwide. In essence, this translates into a single, general aim: securing the existence and the future of the Jewish people wherever they are." Sharansky is no less than a powerful spokesman for the worldwide Zionist movement. And now, beyond any question, his views are directing Bush's worldview.

Considering all of this, it is no wonder that on Jan. 22, South Korea's English-language media voice, ***Chosun Ilbo***, went so far as to describe Sharansky's views as "a blueprint for U.S. foreign policy."

Sidebar commentary:

Natan Sharansky Pegged as 'Hypocrite'

Human rights for some — but not for all

Although the worldwide media hails President Bush's philosophical mentor, Israeli politician Natan Sharansky, as a "human rights activist," there is much more to Sharansky's point of view than the media is saying.

Writing on Jan. 9 in ***The Washington Post Book World*** — in response to a review of Sharansky's book, ***The Case for Democracy***, published on Dec. 26 — M. J. Rosenberg of Chevy Chase, Md., laid out Sharansky's hypocrisy in no uncertain terms:

> Sharansky advocates for human rights only when his own country, Israel, is not involved. Throughout his post-Soviet-prison career, he has used his celebrity status to support human rights for everyone — except Palestinians. [Sharansky believes] that before Palestinians are permitted a state and perhaps (just perhaps — he is a strong supporter of Israel's settler movement) an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, they must fulfill a host of conditions. For Palestinians, basic rights are conditional; for everyone else, they are fundamental.

Pointing out Sharansky's double standard in proclaiming himself a human rights activist, Rosenberg concluded:

> The test of whether one is a human rights activist or one who simply uses the issue for political ends is that person's willingness to apply the human rights measuring stick to his own people. It is pretty easy to limit your calls for human rights to nations other than your own.
>
> For Sharansky, concern for Palestinians is the test of whether or not his claim to the mantle of human rights activist is genuine. As [Sharansky's] book demonstrates, he fails — big time.

A journalist specializing in media critique, Michael Collins Piper is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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